

TRAVEL NOTES

Climate

Like much of Malaysia, Sarawak enjoys a tropical climate with average daytime temperatures hovering between 25 degrees and 32 degrees Celsius. At night, on a rainy day, the mercury might dip to a minimum of 22 degrees Celsius. Sarawak can be visited any time of the year. The rainy season or landas is between November and February. While there are occasionally days when it rains continuously during the landas, more likely than not the showers fall abruptly and are over just as quickly. The average annual rainfall is between 330 cm and 460 cm.

Time

Sarawak is eight hours ahead of GMT.

Language

Bahasa Melayu or Malay is the national language. However, English is widely spoken especially by those in the travel industry.

Getting There

Sarawak is easily accessible from Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia, and Singapore, both of which are linked by air to most international cities.

Malaysia Airlines (MAS) flies at least eight times a day to Kuching, the capital of Sarawak from Kuala Lumpur and three times daily from Singapore. It also has several domestic flights between Kuching and Johor Bahru in Peninsular Malaysia, and Kota Kinabalu in Sabah. MAS offers international connection from Kuching to Seoul and Tokyo once a week and twice weekly flights between Kuching and Pontianak in Kalimantan.

In addition, there are flights twice weekly between Singapore and Kuching on Singapore Airlines and there are also daily flights by Royal Brunei Airlines between Kuching and Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei.

New routes introduced in November 1994 also include a twice weekly flights between Kuching and Hong Kong on Dragonair and connections from Kuching to Manila and Taipei by MAS.

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17th, 24th - 27th & 30th Floor,
Menara Dato' Onn
Putra World Trade Center
45 Jalan Tun Ismail
50480 Kuala Lumpur
Tel : 03-2935188 Fax : 03-2935884

For more information, contact :

Tourism Division

Ministry of Environment and Tourism

4th Floor, Wisma Bapa Malaysia, Petra Jaya
93502 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia

SARAWAK, MALAYSIA The Best of Borneo



CULTURE



NATURE



ADVENTURE

TOURISM
MALAYSIA

Sarawak
tourism
The Best of Borneo



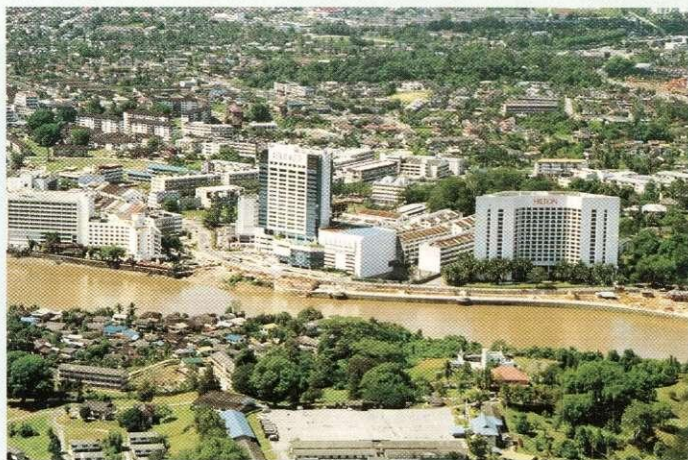
Sarawak is the largest state in Malaysia. It covers an area of 124,000 square kilometres and has a coastline of some 800 kilometres facing the South China Sea. Lying on the northwest coast of Borneo, the third largest island in the world, Sarawak shares its boundaries with Kalimantan (Indonesia Borneo) in the south, Brunei and Sabah in the north.

AN ENCHANTING HISTORY

Sarawak's history is one of heroic adventure and romance, piracy and rebellion. It is a story of brave tribal warriors intensely protective of their respective territories, engaging in fierce battles to protect their domains. It is the story of a young Englishman named James Brooke who had set off for the Far East in search of adventure. As fate would have it, he ended up establishing a despotic, though benevolent rule, over Sarawak for more than a century. It is a story of a nation which saw itself make a sudden leap from being a small British colony for a brief period to being one of the more dynamic, progressive and bustling business centre and tourist destination in Asia-Pacific.



The Astana built in 1870 by the second Rajah, Charles Brooke is now the official residence of the Head of State



Modern-day Sarawak

Yet, despite all the changes that Sarawak has undergone through all these years, it retains the qualities which never fail to leave anyone who have set foot on its shores virtually charmed and enchanted.

Its charming, rustic riverine towns, its historical sites and buildings speak of its colourful and enchanted past while its charming peoples, who may have adopted modern lifestyles in the midst of modern amenities and conveniences, retain the much-cherished qualities of warmth, hospitality and friendships.



The Sarawak State Crest

Administration Of Sarawak

Administratively, Sarawak is divided into nine divisions. Kuching is the First Division and the largest. It is also the capital city of Sarawak. The rest are Sri Aman, Sibul, Miri, Limbang, Sarikei, Kapit, Samarahan and Bintulu.



HARMONY IN DIVERSITY

Sarawak is the most multiracial state in Malaysia with over 27 ethnic groups living together, coming from diverse backgrounds.



The population of Sarawak was estimated at 1.7 million. Of these, the Ibans and the Chinese make up almost equal numbers, contributing to a third each of the population. The Malays are third in number followed by the Bidayus, the Melanaus and the Orang Ulus. The other groups - Indians, Eurasians, Javanese and Europeans together make up the rest of Sarawak's population.

TRADITIONALLY, some salient characteristics among the ethnic groups in Sarawak are as follows :

The Ibans

The Iban are a mobile people, fishing in the rivers, hunting in the forests and cultivating hill rice in the jungle. They live in longhouses comprising several family bilik or apartments.

In the past, the Ibans were feared as warriors who practised headhunting as a means of survival against enemies. Headhunting has long ceased but their colourful festivals still centre on dances that tell of heroism, spiritualism and are a form of thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest.

The Chinese

The Chinese first came to Borneo well before the Brooke era. There is evidence unearthed from excavations around Santubong that the Chinese might have come to trade during the Tang Sung Yuan dynasties from A.D. 618 to 1368.

The Malay

The Malays were mostly farmers and fishermen and are thus found in the coastal areas, fringing the rivers. They were

believed to have come from the Malay Archipelago, Brunei and Kalimantan. Their culture is largely influenced by Islam.

Bidayuh

The Bidayuh were once a coastal people who had been driven inland by sea pirates called Lanuns. Like the Ibans, headhunting used to be practised in the olden days.

Melanau

The Melanau are considered to have been the original settlers in Sarawak. They settled mainly around the coast and rivers and are highly regarded as good boatbuilders and fishermen.

Orang Ulu

Orang Ulu refers to all the other minority indigenous groups in Sarawak. It is a name given collectively to describe the upriver people living in Sarawak's interiors.

They total 21 groups in all. The main groups are the Kayans, Kenyahs and Kelabits. The Kayans and Kenyahs number about 30,000 and the Kelabits 10,000.

TODAY, however, the peoples of Sarawak are among the most educated, modern and sophisticated in the world. Yet, although they live in the midst of modern conveniences and amenities and are engaged in modern-day occupations, they retain their strong cultural identity and are proud of their cultural heritage.

It is this deep sense of pride in their culture which enables them to greet their guests and visitors a warm welcome and share with them a knowledge of their rich cultures and traditions.



ADVENTURE WONDERS OF SARAWAK

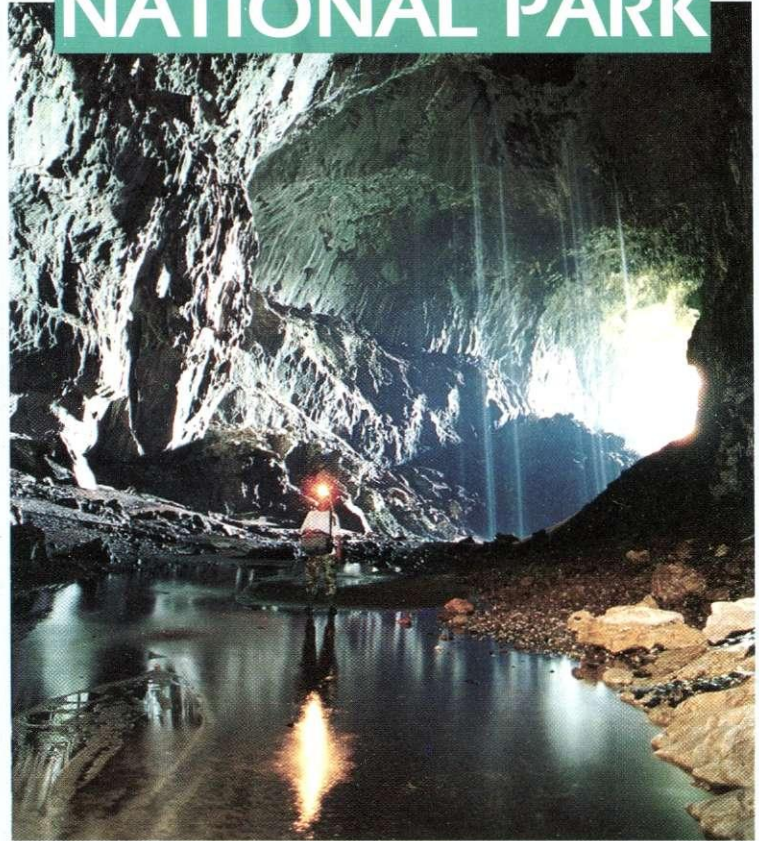
A land of many rivers, rolling terrains and majestic mountains, Sarawak has been described as a "Land of Superlatives". It has Malaysia's longest river, the world's largest flower (the Rafflesia), the world's largest cave passage and natural chamber and evidence of the earliest known existence of man in Southeast Asia. Complemented by the rich cultural heritage of the diverse ethnic communities of Sarawak as well as the national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, the State offers an unfailing appeal and challenge to those seeking thrills and adventure amidst nature.

Mountain climbing, rafting, canoeing, caving and jungle trekking are just some of the challenging activities one can indulge in in Sarawak.



Malaysia's longest River - Rejang River

MULU NATIONAL PARK



The Deer Cave

The Mulu National Park is one of Sarawak's greatest attractions. Mulu's major claim to fame is its spectacular limestone caves. The caves of Mulu command a long list of superlatives including the world's largest cave passage (the Deer Cave), the world's largest natural rock chamber (the Sarawak



A jungle path to the Deer Cave



A stream at Mulu National Park

Chamber) and the Clearwater Cave, the longest cave system in South-East Asia.

The spacious Deer Cave at 1000 metres wide and 120 metres high can contain London's St Paul's Cathedral five times over. The 60 metres high 'shower' continuously pouring from the roof near the 'Garden of Eden' is one of the many spectacular views within the Cave. The Sarawak Chamber can accommodate 40 Boeing 747 aircraft.

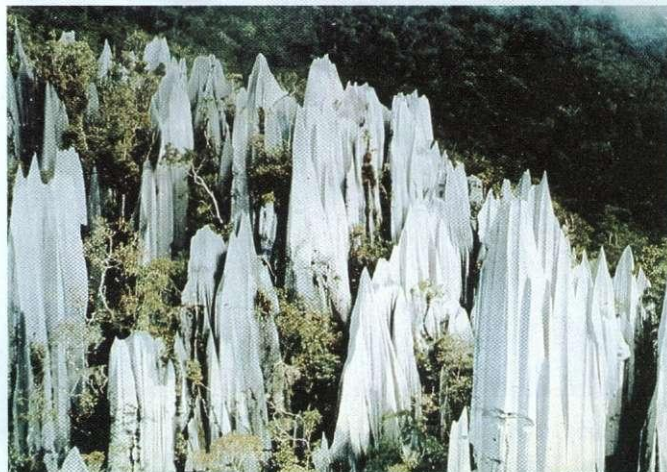
Besides the magnificent displays of limestone formation of stalactites and stalagmites at Land Cave and Wind Cave, Mulu National Park is also a paradise for naturalists and adventurers who love jungle trekking and mountain climbing. The Park has 1500 species of flowering plants, including 170 species of wild orchids and 10 types of pitcher plants. There are 67 species of mammals and 262 types of birds, including all eight species of hornbills.

Miri and Limbang are the two main entry points to Mulu National Park. From Miri, visitors can either fly by scheduled Twin Otter flights operated daily by MAS or take the express boat and motorised-longboat all the way to Mulu.



A fascinating view of the Wind Cave

THE PINNACLES



For those who have the time and energy, the challenging Pinnacles, sitting on Gunung Api (Fire Mountain) is another exciting destination within the Park. It is accessible to anyone who is reasonably fit.

The journey begins with a two-hour motorised-longboat ride to Kuala Berar, followed by a five-kilometre walk through virgin jungle to Camp 5 for an overnight stay.

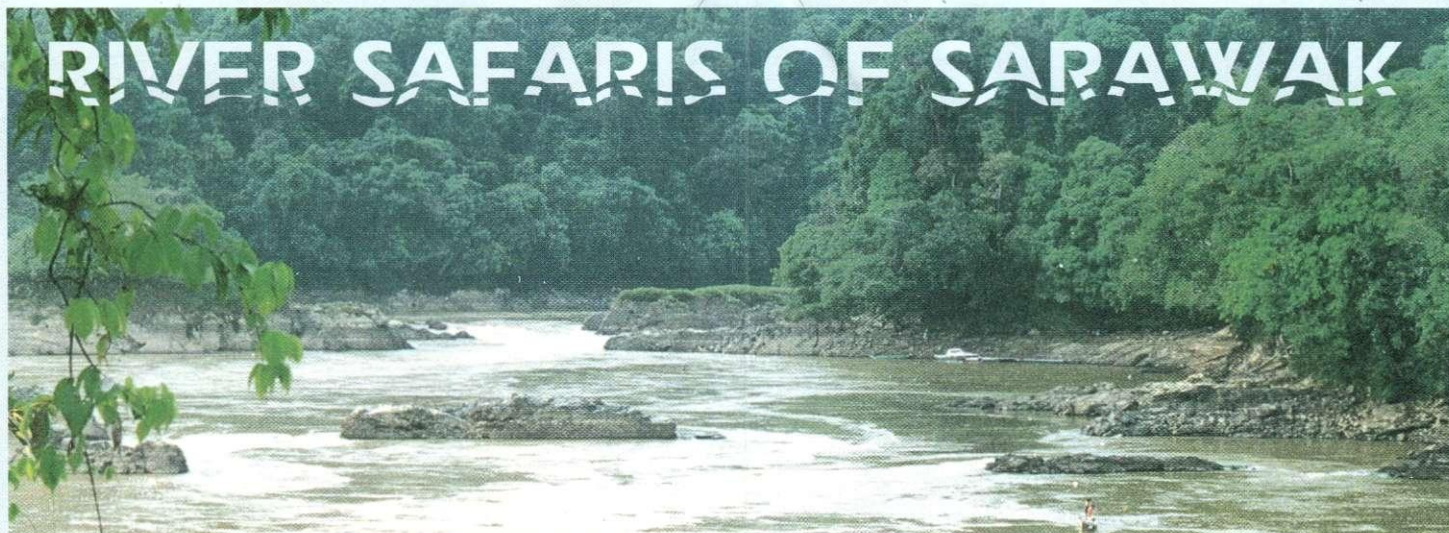
The spectacular Pinnacles, sculptured and grooved by the rain over millions of years, rise above the tree tops to a height of 45 metres. It can be reached from Camp 5 after a 3-hour climb. The climb is challenging, filled with fun and excitement. Vegetations vary following the changes of altitudes. The varieties of wild orchids and pitcher plants scarcely seen elsewhere can be spotted along the trek before reaching the Pinnacles.



Pitcher Plant!



Earth Star



RIVER SAFARIS OF SARAWAK

The Skrang River Safari

Skrang is an exciting destination for visitors who wish to see and experience life in a longhouse, once the home of the notorious pirates and head-hunters.

The journey to Skrang is about 232 kilometres from Kuching. It takes about 5 hours by road and followed by a 1½ hours of motor-propelled longboat journey along the Skrang river.

Spend the night at a longhouse to experience the traditions and customs of the Dayak Ibans. The highlight of the Skrang River Safari is an evening entertainment by the longhouse residents, featuring traditional dances and music. Tuak, a specially brewed rice wine will be served during the evening entertainment.

A jungle walk on the following day is equally interesting. It is an exciting experience to stroll through the dense tropical rainforest, where stimulating sights and sounds open up a world of wonderful discovery.

The Lemanak River Safari

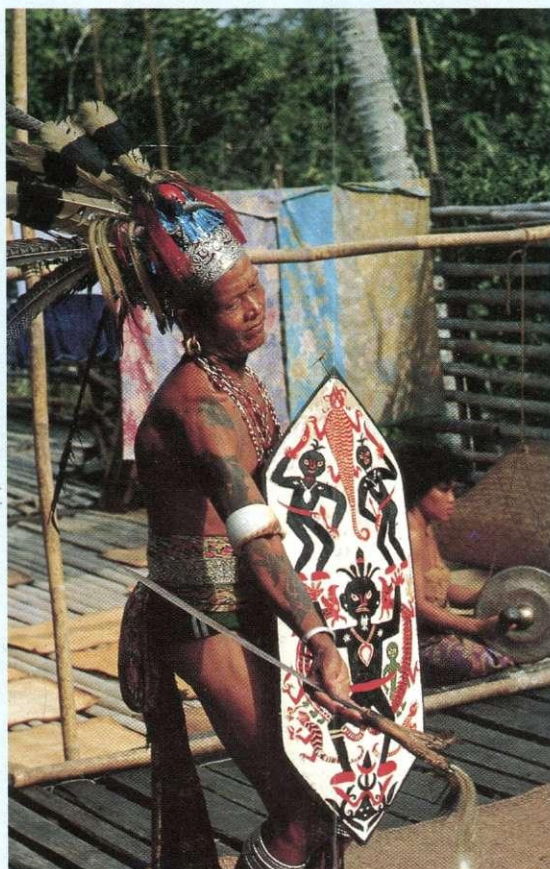
Lemanak is a tributary of the main Batang Lupar River. Many traditional longhouses can be found situated along the river.

Like Skrang, the Lemanak River is another exciting destination within easy reach from Kuching.

About 220 kilometres away from Kuching, Lemanak can be reached in about 5 hours by road. The journey passes through the scenic countryside, rubber and pepper plantations, padi fields, sago palms and followed by an hour motorised-longboat ride penetrating the tropical rainforest through meandering stream.

An overnight stay gives you an opportunity to have a glimpse of the lifestyle of the longhouse and its people. An evening entertainment by the longhouse folks is most interesting and educational. Traditional dances and music are the highlight of the evening entertainment.

Cock-fighting and jungle trekking on the following day are other highlights of the Lemanak River Safari.



NATURAL WONDERS OF SARAWAK

There is no better place than Sarawak to discover the wonders of a tropical rainforest. Sarawak's rainforests, which covers over two-thirds of the State's total land area, are virtually nature's paradise. Sarawak's rainforests are ecological wonders; each site has its individual eco-system supporting its own range of wildlife. It is home to over 2,000 astonishing species of some of the world's most exotic plants and animals. Watch the antics of the leaf-eating proboscis monkey, marvel at the bloom of the Rafflesia, the world's largest flower, take a look at the carnivorous hornbill. These are only some of the flora and fauna specimens you can discover on a rainforest walk in any of Sarawak's ten national parks and three wildlife sanctuaries and rehabilitation centres.

Besides making a trip to the world-famous Gunung Mulu National Park, visitors to Sarawak should not miss the following natural wonders:



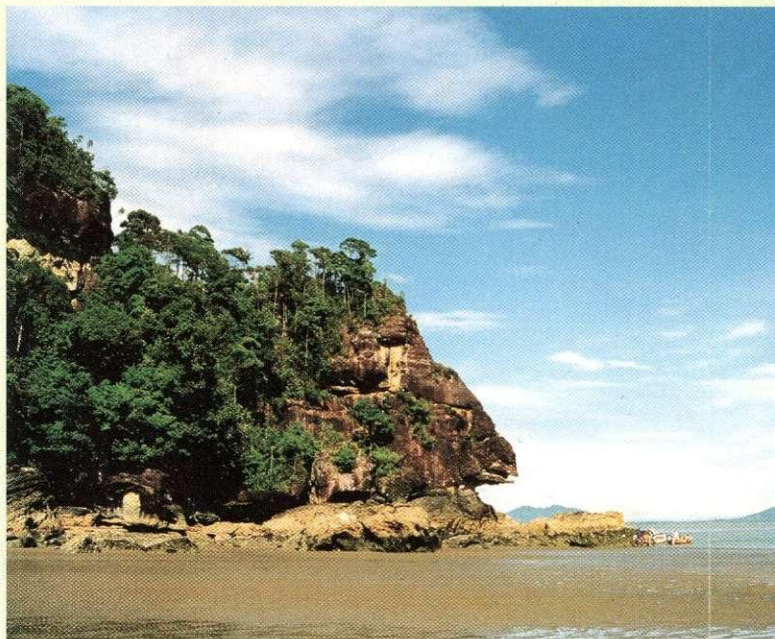
A Silvered-leaf monkey

BAKO NATIONAL PARK

Bako National Park, 37 kilometres from Kuching, can be reached by 30-minute drive to Kampung Bako and then followed by a 25-minute boat ride.

The constant erosion over millions of years, had turned Bako into a picturesque coastline of steep cliffs, rocky head-lands and many stretches of sandy bays. The erosion caused by constant waves at the base of cliffs had carved and created many of the rocks into sea arches and sea stacks. Beautiful sandstone formation featuring pink and iron patterns on cliff faces can be seen along most of the coastline.

Many, who have visited the Park commented that Bako National Park is a treasure chest of fauna and flora. Naturalists will be thrilled to find a wide range of vegetations including the varieties of pitcher plants and wild orchids. The varieties of



A bay at Bako National Park

vegetation found in Borneo can also be seen in the Park's mangrove forest, mixed dipterocarp forest, peat swamp forest and kerangas forest.

Trekking through any of its 16 well maintained jungle trails is an interesting experience. Within the Park, it is not uncommon to see troops of long-tailed Macaques and silver-leaf monkeys along with giant monitor lizards, plantain squirrels, wild boars and mouse deers. The most significant animal in the Park is the bizarre long nosed proboscis monkeys found only in Borneo island.

Swimming, beach combing at low tide and sunset watching are popular activities along the sandy bays of the Park. Bako National Park is truly an ideal place for nature lovers and eco-minded adventurers.

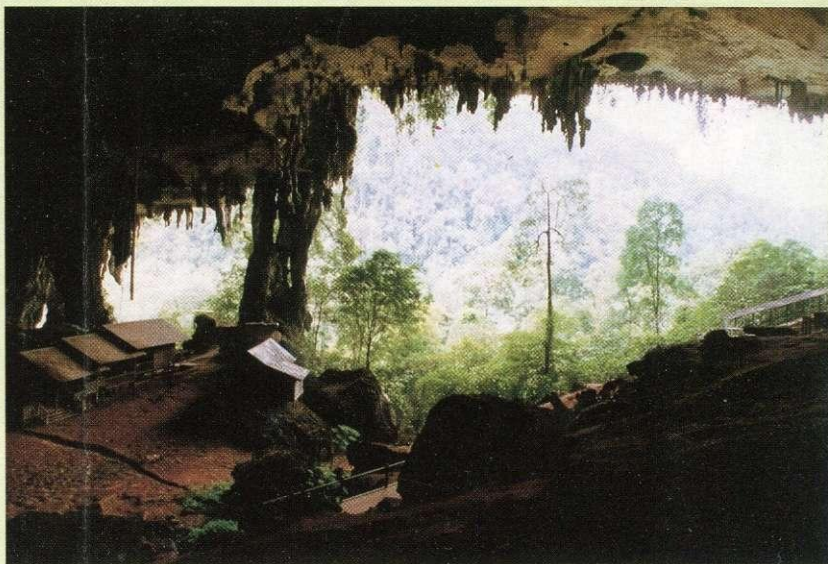
THE HISTORIC NIAH CAVE

The Niah National Park is world famous for the oldest human remains in South-East Asia found in its Great Caves dating back some 40,000 years. The archeologists also found fragments of pottery, stone tools, ornaments and a splendid set of wall-

painting of red-haematite depicting activities of stick-like men with hunting weapons and boats. The work of the unknown artist, estimated to be 1000 years old, still beckon travellers from around the world.

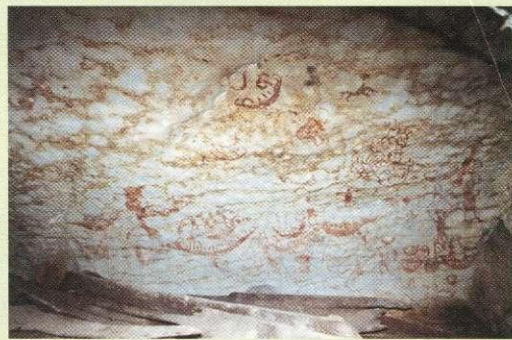
The Niah Cave is accessible by road from Miri or Bintulu. It takes two hours from Miri and three hours from Bintulu to the Park Headquarters at Pangkalan Batu. This is followed by a 45-minute walk along plankwalk of 3 kilometres long to reach the entrance of the Great Caves without getting your feet wet when strolling through the dense tropical vegetation.

Millions of bats and swiftlets made the dark recesses of the Niah Caves their



The famous Niah Cave

home. Along the way, a common scene is meeting workers collecting guano, the accumulation of bird and bat faeces for use as fertilizer. The caves are also known as a site where edible birds' nests could be gathered. Birds' nests made out of the glutinous saliva of millions of swiftlets are also collected by labourers who risk their life to reach the ceiling of the caves at a height of some 50 metres or higher.



Over 1,000 years old wall paintings in Niah Cave

The other National Parks in Sarawak are:-

Batang Ai National Park in Batang Ai

Gunung Gading near Lundu

Kubah in Matang

Lambir Hills near Miri

Longan Bunut National Park near Miri

Similajau National Park in Bintulu

Tanjung Datu National Park near Kuching

SEMENGGOH WILDLIFE REHABILITATION CENTRE

Unlike in a zoo, the Orang Utan at Semenggoh Rehabilitation Centre are set free in a 740-hectare forest reserve. Here, the Orang Utans are being nurtured to readapt themselves to the jungle life. The Centre, 32 kilometres south of the Capital, is one of many outdoor attractions of Kuching.

A 30-minute leisurely stroll on the specially built plankwalks from the entrance to the Rehabilitation Centre also provides an opportunity to view various species of trees from the rainforest and some tropical fruit trees.

The Centre opens daily from 0835 to 1545 hours including Sundays and Public Holidays. A visit to the Centre is recommended at or before the feeding times for the Orang Utan. The feeding times are 0830-0900 and 1145-1200 in the morning and 1500-1515 in the afternoon.



Besides the Semenggoh Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, there are three Wildlife Sanctuaries in Sarawak. These are areas designated for the protection and preservation of wildlife, particularly the rare species, in the state.

These are the:-

Lanjak-Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary in Lubok Antu, located in the Second Division of Sri Aman,
Sibuti Wildlife Sanctuary in Miri,
Samunsan Wildlife Sanctuary in Sematan and
Matang Wildlife Centre near Kuching.

IDYLIC RESORTS

About 35 kilometres away from Kuching are three popular retreats. Guests can have a choice of three international standard beach resorts for relaxing and lazing in the sun and by the sea.

Damai Beach Resort, Damai Lagoon and Santubong Resort all offers facilities for both land and sea recreational and sports activities.

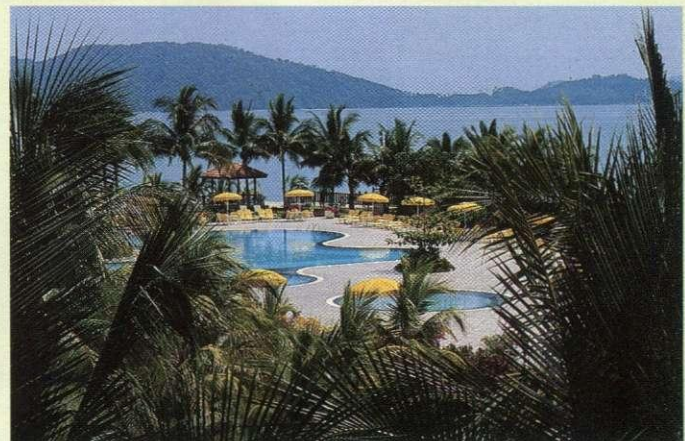
Camp Permai, also located in the same area, offers outdoor activities which include leadership training and seaports such as kayaking, wind surfing, sailing and raft expedition. The Camp provides comfortable accommodation with a choice of log cabins or treehouses.

Buntal Village Resort is an interesting place for those who want to experience a typical Malay fishing village setting. The Resort is 25 kilometres away from Kuching.

Other resorts where one can spend a tranquil break farther away from the city bustle are the Batang Ai Resort and the Pelagus Rapids Resort.

Batang Ai Longhouse Resort is set right amidst the Batang Ai National Park with a commanding view of the serene Batang Ai hyroelectric dam.

Pelagus Rapids Resort is located in the Kapit Division where the challenging rapids of the Pelagus are a major attraction for those looking for thrilling adventures.





CULTURAL WONDERS OF SARAWAK

Each of the over 27 racial groups in Sarawak boasts of a rich cultural heritage. They have their own costumes, dances, festivals, architecture, arts and crafts and other traditions. This intermingling of cultures, coupled with Sarawak's colourful history, have produced a

wealth of sights and attractions, crafts and artefacts that will not only enlighten but charm and enchant any of our visitor. Complemented by the warmth and friendliness of our peoples, Sarawak's rich cultural wonders can be sampled by visiting the following places of interests:



SARAWAK'S MUSEUM



The Sarawak Museum, reputed to be the best in the region should not be missed by visitors to the City. The vast collection housed in the Museum reveals Sarawak's efforts in the preservation and conservation of the cultural heritage and natural history of Borneo.

The idea of creating a museum to hold Sarawak's relics was first mooted by Charles Brooke, the second White Rajah of Sarawak. Later the man who influenced him to build a permanent museum was Alfred Russel Wallace, a naturalist who was in Sarawak for two years conducting a research on the evolution of man based on the Orang Utan of Borneo.

The first Museum designed along the lines of a Normandy town hall was opened in 1891 and extended to its present form in 1911.

The Museum opens daily from 0900 to 1800 hrs except Friday.

ISLAMIC MUSEUM

The newly opened Islamic Museum, near the Sarawak Museum is the first of its kind in South-East Asia. The Islamic Museum has 8 galleries exclusively devoted to the exhibits of architecture, coinage, weaponry, textile, pottery, porcelains and other artefacts of Islamic origin.



The huge collection of artefacts from ASEAN countries and other Islamic nations provides a source of rich information to those who wish to trace the development of Islam in the Malay Archipelago and its connection with the development of Islam in other countries, such as India, China, Persia and the Arab state.

THE LIVING MUSEUM



Popularly known as the **Living Museum**, the **Sarawak Cultural Village** is a showcase for Sarawak's rich cultural diversity. Visitors to the Village can sample Sarawak all in one single place. The Cultural Village, built on a six hectares site at the foothill of the legendary Mt. Santubong, is 35 kilometres from Kuching City and is a stone's throw away from Damai Holiday Inn, a beach resort.

The Cultural Village is quaintly landscaped with a manmade lake at the centre surrounded by 7 authentic replicas of ethnic houses: the Bidayuh centre house and longhouse, the Iban longhouse, the Penan hut, the Orang Ulu longhouse, the Melanau Rumah Tinggi, the Malay house and the Chinese farmhouse. Displayed in each house are many artefacts made by the individual dwellers. Demonstration of arts and crafts like beadworks, wood and bamboo carvings, pua weaving and straw weaving can be seen while touring the Village.

The rich cultural heritage in the form of dances and music presented by various ethnic groups is one of the highlights of the visit. The grand cultural show which lasts about one hour is performed in the Village theatre.

OTHER MUSEUMS

Besides the "Living Museum" (Cultural Village) and the Islamic Museum, there are other special interest museums in the State, most of which are found in Kuching City. These are the **Cat Museum**, **Chinese History Museum**, **Police Museum** (Fort Margherita) and the **Timber Museum**.

THE WATERFRONT



Another place where our guests and tourists can mingle with the local folks and have a glimpse of Sarawak's rich culture is at the Kuching Waterfront.

Native culture is celebrated throughout the Waterfront; found in building's architecture, craft stores, local cuisine in restaurants and hawker carts, slated murals and sculptures, even on the bows of small Malay boats (sampans) which ferry people across the historic Sarawak River.

SUNDAY MARKET

Kuching City's Sunday Market or "Pasar Minggu" is, as its name implies, held every Sunday although the market activities start as early as Saturday afternoon.

This is perhaps the best place to meet the local people since this is where the indigenous groups bring out jungle fruits and vegetables to sell to the city folks.

SARAWAK'S HANDICRAFT

Sarawak is well-known for its rich diversity of traditional handicrafts. Ethnic wood-carvings, beadworks, textile-weaving and bamboo and rattan baskets are of intricate indigenous designs and motifs and are distinguished by their fine craftsmanship and often, vibrant colours. Among these are the 'pua kumbu' (handwoven Iban textile), the 'kain songket' (handwoven cloth inlaid with golden threads by the Malays),



the 'terindak' hats by the Melanau, the Penan 'ajat' baskets and sleeping mats, the Kenyah 'Sa'ong' sunhats, the Iban 'parang ilang' (local sword), clay and ceramic pottery and a host of other handicrafts.

Sarawak's indigenous artefacts and handicrafts are available at many of the souvenir and antique and curio shops to be found in Kuching and in the major urban centres.



Sarawak's beadworks and basketry



Weaving the famous "kain songket"